# Limitations of Realism on The Complexity of South Asian Politics (India)

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A mainstream school of thought in international relations, realism usually provides a pragmatic prism through which nation-states can be primarily judge on collective capabilities, power dynamics, and national interests. Realism has certain limitations while applying regionally particularly south Asia. However, there is much more to appreciate in South Asia with the understanding of India's strategic role as a regional power with all the complexity of the social and political landscape, historical narratives, cultural diversities, and economic inter dependencies a view that goes beyond the realist approaches.

**Limitations of Realism in South Asian Politics**

Realist theory argues an anarchic international arena where the states are self-centered that have as their prime intent maximization of power and survival. Such a theory however never discusses the political dynamics inside the states and how these dynamics affect the state behaviour, insights exposed by history, a perspective offered by ancient Indian realism through Kautilya's works, and is altogether different from the international realism pursued today.

One of the major weaknesses of realism is over-simplifying state interactions into very simple power conflicts. So, in this, the Indo-Pakistan rivalry is no exception: while the rivalry often tells us to cast it as a competitive territorial contest based on the 1947 Partition, far more profoundly influencing present-day relations. For instance, whereas Nehru's policies were more likely to favor non-alignment and social variables, since 2014 the Modi government has taken a more pro-American stance, driven by necessity in the geopolitical game against China's rise.

The statement that "India is at the center of U.S. foreign policy" is a move so dramatic that realism cannot capture because it anchors itself on state action and also how its possible to have economic ties and confrontation at the same time with same country (Sino-India complex ties).

In this context, realism fails to provide space for the non-state actors and transnational issues of climate change and terrorism in defining regional politics. In addition, the story across the nation with the growing populism and a stronger local identity moves away from state-centric considerations, which further complicates the realist argument. (prioritize domestic one over international's)

**Economic Interdependence and Regional Politics**

Economic interdependence is perhaps another unexpected for realism in accounting for the present South Asian relationship. While regional associations like SAARC and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) pursue economic cooperation as their very purpose, constant territorial rivalry negates some of the very objectives. The realist thought cites sovereignty and security for these relations but that can hinder development mutually despite economic gains.

However, a prime example of India engaging with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)* will be used to outline the policy. Economic interests can and do overcome the security dilemma, and therefore states may care more about economic stability than they do about military capability. However, ground reality is that there is economic cooperation along with security dilemma.

Further complicating matters is the Belt and Road Initiative of China. While John Mearsheimer blames the United States for not being able to check the rise of China, India's actions feature a combination of both fear over how Beijing has assumed an upper hand over its neighbours and strategic ties with the United States, at least in the Indo-Pacific. Realist models, which have long been based on hard power, completely overlook these essential elements of the economic and diplomatic dimensions involved.

**Identity Politics and Historical Narratives**

In South Asia, particularly in India, identity politics has increasingly played an important role in directing political behaviour and policy-making. The rigidity of realism that first of all bases its prime reliance upon rational self-interest in state interaction tends to play down the significance of identity, whether based in caste, religious affiliation, or ethnicity. The surge of Hindu nationalism under this government has instrumentalized such identities, which applies both to domestic governance and to international relations. Policies drawing on the fundamental of Hindu nationalism, such as the promotion of "Bharat" rather than "India" that have the potential to polarize communities, give fuel to domestic anxieties, and affect India's regional diplomacy, particularly in a regionally culturally diverse one such as South Asia.

Given the complexities of South Asian politics, particularly in the case of India, realism as a theory has many gaping holes. History, culture, identity politics, economic inter dependencies, and non-state actors have to be factored into an analysis in order for the understanding to be better developed. Strategic choices like India's prioritising and balancing act between containing an asymmetric threat by Pakistan and an existential threat by China expose the failure of realism as a theory that explains the strategic choice in this case. Multidimensional engagement with international relations will help policymakers and analysts pinpoint more sophisticated strategies pertinent to the South Asian realities. As political landscapes in the region changes, moving beyond realism is integral in effectively working through some of the complex issues that are associated with the region's

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